

Over in San Angelo, Shortgrassers last week were swarming for the city's animal rodeo and fat stock show. The linear feet of high-topped boots reached wild proportions. Restaurants and motels overflowed on western dress, chili parlors and hamburger joints looked like a recall of the Old West. Buffalo Bill would feel right at home. Much fun making and parading were in full swing.

I seemed to note a different feeling among the out of town folks. Not exactly sadness, but more the aura of farewell, the atmosphere of an air terminal from the desk to the gate. Like war scenes of a bus station. How I'd suppose travelers act while boarding a ship to a far away land.

Word, you see, has spread in the outposts that if gasoline rationing comes into effect, the limit is going to be a gallon and a half per day. News reports say that Congress is already arguing over favoring any particular industry or locale.

By using San Angelo as the hub of the Shortgrass Country, this year's rodeo may be the last time we'll ever see each other on video tapes or snapshots from post office boxes. Locketts may come back in high style. I haven't heard any exchanges of locks of hair among the people. But it did seem that lovers from different towns seemed to be in tighter embraces. That could; however, be merely a sign of spring.

Farther west of San Angelo, the old country is so huge that gas pumps on the ranches are too far from the house to make a gallon of gas worthwhile. Out in the Big Bend section, distances are so long that gasoline distributors will have to use mule trains to pick up the ration stamps to break even.

I don't know what anybody would do with such a meager amount of gasoline in, say, Ft. Stockton, Texas. After he'd burned the ant beds around the house, I guess he could take up building model airplanes in his spare time.

In the days of ample fuel, those hombres had funny looking cheeks from equalizing their tanks with siphoning hoses. Outfits close to the roads had to barricade their pumps to keep away stranded motorists. I'm unsure but I think the wrecker and the auxiliary tank were invented in that area. If they weren't, the area spawned the idea.

Impact of the shortage really hit me the other day on the way to the rodeo. About five miles from San Angelo, an old boy was hurling nine peafowls from his van at a trailer park. Being an ex-peafowl owner, I knew right away what his intentions were. Texas would never have had a brand registration law if peacocks had been included.

After recovering from the shock of seeing a grown man in such a high state of emotion, I began to brood on how hard it was going to be in the motor home gypsies to be docked in one place. Last year the trailer house set didn't have to worry about someone kicking out a puppy or leaving a basket baby on their folding steps. Such proverbial pests as tax harvesters and bill collectors were left a set of wheel prints for a forwarding address. Owning a trailer was the way to live.

Old folks, in particular, make a big story of traveling across the country. But please note that nothing was mentioned in their tales of the amount of small loan departments and free baby sitting nurseries that were left behind by old granny and gramps as they changed from stationary street numbers to fast moving license plates.

It wasn't a new thing. The grandest days in the sales of houseboats were linked to the big booms in washable diapers and high interest rates. Mobile homes were perfect getaway wagons. Mom and Dad look mighty settled in the insurance ads, but that was before Winnebago gave them the chance to escape.

I've made up my mind to walk or ride a bicycle every day. Depending on a political body for your pickup fuel is a high risk venture. The rodeo turned out to be a grand affair. At least the Washington worthies won't be able to ration our memories.